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I. DIRECT OBJECT MARKING IN CIRCUMPONTIC LANGUAGES AND TURKISH

1. The present article has a twofold purpose: a) to expose a comparative approach to direct object markers in Circumpontic languages and to formulate, if possible, a typological feature that distinguishes in that respect Circumpontic languages from others; b) on the bases of that typological feature to establish whether Turkish presents some affinities with that proposed Sprachbund or not.

2.0. Once we have widened the researched group of substratum-linked languages, from Balkanic to Circumpontic, the comparative approach becomes richer and more enlightening. We shall examine direct object markers from such a standpoint.

2.1. In Albanian the direct object case coincides with the nominative when it is indefinite (or definite plural) and is marked by the markers *-in, -ën* (for masculine and feminine respectively) in case it is definite: e.g.

Mora një libër nga rafti
(I) took a book from the shelf.
Mora librin nga rafti
(I) took the book from the shelf.

2.2. Something similar happens in Bulgarian, with the only difference that only masculine singular definite nouns have their own direct object marker, -a: e.g.

Ние чакаме един влак
We wait for a train.
Ние чакаме влака от София
We wait for the train to Sofia.

2.3. In Persian, indefinite direct objects coincide with the nominative while all definite direct objects are marked by the suffix *-ra:* e.g.

من پول گرفتم /man pul gereftam/
I got money.
من پولرا گرفتم /man pulra gereftam/
I got the money.

2.4. In Romanian there are no direct object case endings. No endings change depending on whether the direct object is definite or indefinite. Human and non-human direct objects are distinguished. The latter are introduced by the preposition pe and are preceded by a reduplicated personal pronoun, while the former are not: e.g.

El vede un tablou.	He sees a picture.
El îl vede pe tatăl său.	He sees to his father.

2.5. In Armenian we find an almost identical situation. The only difference is in the way to distinguish human and non-human direct objects. The former coincide with the nominative while the latter coincide with the dative: e.g.

Նա է սիրում իր մորը /na e sirum ir mora/
He loves his mother
Նա է սիրում գիրքերը /na e sirum girk'erə/
He loves books

2.6. Modern Greek shows a direct object marking system inherited from superstratum-based Old Greek. Direct object endings do not indicate whether the direct object is definite or indefinite, human or non human: e.g.

Βλεπω μια γυναικα	(I) see a woman.
Βλεπω την γυναικα	(I) see the woman
Βλεπω μια ξτενα	(I) see a comb
Βλεπω την ξτενα	(I) see the comb,

3. Thus we may observe two main direct object marking systems:

(a) Indefinite direct object coincides with the nominative, while the definite direct object (at least in the case of masculine singular nouns) has a special ending, which

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renders both categories: definite and direct object. Such is the case (so far) of Albanian, Bulgarian and Persian.

(b) No special endings for the direct object. Distinction between human and non-human direct objects achieved by means of a preposition plus reduplication, or by means of case replacement. Such is the case of Romanian and Armenian. Similar phenomena take place in Spanish, Russian and Hindi.

Let us keep in mind that in case (a) the definite direct object marker is both a definite marker, and a direct object marker; i.e. it can be considered either as a "definite accusative marker or as an "accusative form of the postposed article". From this standpoint, also Persian would have a productive postposed article (used only in its accusative form). In case (b) there are no traces of such "accusative postposed article". If it ever existed, it died away. The distinction definite/indefinite is achieved by using the same postposed article as in the nominative. There are no direct object endings of any kind. We could also say that in case (b) the accusative article coincides with the nominative one.

The case of Modern Greek is an exception and remains outside the two main groups. The same we can say about Georgian where we find such phenomena as ergativity and case inversion and where the category of definiteness (at least in the modern language) does not seem to exist.

This two direct object marking systems can be reduced to one typological feature: "If a Circumpontic language has direct object endings in its nominal flexion, then, only the definite direct object nouns (at least the masculine singular ones) will be marked by such endings, while the indefinite ones will have zero marker and coincide with the nominative". Modern Greek and Georgian are exceptions.

4.0 Now let us examine the case of Turkish, a languages, which from the genetical and typological points of view differ from all other Circumpontic tongues. In fact, Turkish lacks all the features traditionally attributed to a Balkanic or Circumpontic language, i.e., subjunctive instead of infinitive, future tense formed by means of the verb "to wish", postposed article, etc. Such a situation, certainly, is not precisely the most encouraging one for researchers in the young field of Circumpontic linguistics. One might think that, even in the case of finding some affinity between Turkish and other languages spoken around the Black Sea, we would probably be dealing with a mere coincidence. If we could just find a feature shared by Turkish with Circumpontic languages but which distinguishes Turkish from other Turkic languages, then we would be on the right track.

Indeed, Turkic languages are spoken in a huge area that stretches from China up to the Balkans. Most of those languages are spoken outside the Circumpontic substratum area. It is easy to suppose that if a feature of Turkish is the effect of substratum influence and not of coincidence, then the other Turkic tongues spoken outside the substratum area should not share that feature.

4.1. Direct object in Turkish is rendered by the ending -u/-ü /-ı /-i (allomorphs selected according to vowel harmony) Such ending is used only if the direct object is determined: e.g.

Mektup yaziyor	He writes a letter.
Mektubu yaziyor	He writes the letter.

4.2. In another Turkic language, Kazakh, which is spoken in Central Asia, far away from the Circumpontic substratum area, the situation is quite different. The direct object ending -ны, -ни, -ды, -ди, -ты, -ти (allomorphs selected according vowel harmony and the last consonant of the word) is used only in the case that the direct object does not immediately precede the verb, independently whether the direct object is definite of indefinite: e.g.

ҚҰРЫЛЫСШЫЛАР ҮЙ САЛДЫ
The/some builders the/a house built.
ҮЙДІ ҚҰРЫЛЫСШЫЛАР САЛДЫ
The/a house the/some builders built.

4.3. This is probably what we were looking for. The occurrence of the Turkish direct object case ending follows the same patterns we found in Albanian, Bulgarian and Persian, and differs from other Turkic tongues spoken outside the Circumpontic area. Keep in mind that these conclusions refer only to the occurrence of the direct object in Turkish and not to the ending itself, which doubtless is of Turkic origin. Thus, we have very probably identified a Circumpontic feature in Turkish, which gives us the right to include this language in the "newly born" Circumpontic Sprachbund. These facts also show that the typological feature exposed in paragraph 3 is valid for six Circumpontic languages: Albanian, Bulgarian, Romanian, Persian and also... Turkish.

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II. PERSIAN IN THE CONTEXT OF CIRCUMPONTIC LANGUAGES

Presumed vestiges of a suffixed definite article

Syntactic similarities between Persian and Armenian, on the one hand, and the Balkanic languages on the other hand are not a new subject in linguistics. This article will deal with the genetic relation between Persian and the Balkanic languages.

The most striking similarities are doubtless the usage of subjunctive instead of infinitive and the fact that the subjunctive is analitically made by means of a prefix added to the present stem of the verb (which loses the *mi-* prefix of the indicative). E.g.:

English	I want to go to the city
Romanian	Vreau să merg la oraș
Albanian	Dua të shkoj në qytet
Bulgarian	**Искам** да идвам в града
ModernGreek	**Θέλω** να παω στη πόλη
Persian	میخواهم بروم به شهر (mîkhâham be-ravam be shahar)

Thus the Persian subjunctive is built by means of a particle *be-* just as Romanian does with the particle *să,* Bulgarian with the particle *da,* Albanian with the particle *të* and Modern Greek with *na.* The usage is very similar, playing the same role as the infinitive in other Indo-European languages.

Another characteristic that Persian shares with Balkanic languages (but not only) is the analytic future tense formed by means of a verb that means "want" or a particle derived from that verb.

English	I will go
Romanian	Voi merge
Albanian	Do të shkoj
Bulgarian	Ще идвам
Modern Greek	Θα παω
Persian	خواهم رفت (khâham raft)

In all the cases above the auxiliary verb or verb origined particle (in bold letters) actually means "wish" or "want". Such characteristic does not belong exclusively to Persian and Balkanic languages and is shared by other languages, such as English. This last fact does not diminish the importance of that common feature as we may observe that, outside the Black Sea area, this feature is relatively rare. Other languages form the future tense by using: special endings (e.g. Hindi), the verb "have" (e.g. Spanish), the verb "go" (e.g. French), the verb "be" (e.g. Russian imperfective future), the verb "become" (e.g. German) or an adverb (e.g. Hungarian future with "majd"). The number of ways to build the future is big enough to regard similarities as "meaningful" but not so big that we could exclude accidental coincidences.

These common features have awaken the interest of researchers, whose enthusiasm rapidly falls when they realize that Persian lacks the most important atribute of a Balkanic language: the suffixed definite article. In fact Persian has no definite article, prefixed of suffixed.

It is curious that linguists have not remarked that vestiges of a definite postposed article are identifiable in restricted relative clauses, where an -î ending is attached to the antecedent. E.g.:

کتابی که خریدید به من بدهید

Kitâb-î ke kharîdîd be man bedehîd

Book-the which you bought, to me give
Give me the book that you bought

From the semantic point of view, we may infer that, as that suffix is used only in the case of restrictive relative clauses, its meaning can be defined as "out of a group, that one; and, of course, that is a really good definition of what a definite article is. It is true that we may also find in Persian an indefinite particle -î which comes from the numeral *yek* (one), as in *dust-î* (a certain friend). In my opinion, the -î ending of the restrictive clause cannot be identified with the indefinite particle -î, since they have opposite semantic values.

If my observations are right, then the last obstacle in considering Persian as substrate-linked to paleo-Balkanic languages is put aside and the very existence of the Circumpontic Sprachbund is thus proved. Another important observation is that the suggested fossilized definite article coincides with the Albanian definite article and the nominative case marker of Georgian (both of them in -î), thus bringing forth new arguments in favour of Ivănescu's idea that the substrate of Circumpontic languages was Caucasian, such as Georgian is.